



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

To: Mayor David B. Cohen
Fr Charles Eisenberg, Immediate Past Chairman
Re: EDC Annual Report
Dt: May 25, 2006

In compliance with City Ordinance Article 5, Section 22-75 (g) (10), the Economic Development Commission is submitting its annual report of activities and recommendations.

The annual report describes the projects and activities undertaken in 2005 and identifies goals for 2006. A complete list of Commission members is also included.

Please transmit the attached report to the Board of Aldermen.



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ANNUAL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN

I. Background

The Economic Development Commission (EDC) was established under Massachusetts General Laws chapter 40, section 8A to promote and develop business and industry within the City of Newton. The Commission was charged with strengthening the local economy leading to new job opportunities for residents and expansion of the City's tax base. City Ordinance Article 5, Section 22-75 lays out the governing provisions as summarized below:

1. The Commission shall consist of 15 members appointed by the Mayor.
2. The Commission has the power and duty to:
 - study, investigate, and appraise economic conditions and trends;
 - promote, assist, and encourage the preservation, development and location of new and existing Newton industry, business and commerce;
 - investigate and assist in the establishment of commercial projects and identify appropriate commercial areas and zones for such establishment;
 - prepare and distribute informational publications;
 - cooperate with civic agencies/commissions/associations, state/federal agencies, municipal departments and officials, and business associations and organizations; and
 - advise and make recommendations to appropriate officials, agencies, boards, departments, and commissions of the City.

This report is prepared and submitted to the Board of Aldermen in compliance with City Ordinance Article 5, Section 22-75 (g) (10).

II. Commission Membership

Mayor David Cohen appointed and the Board of Aldermen approved one new member to the Economic Development Commission, Setti Warren. Gloria Gavis and Steven Konowitz resigned from the Commission.

III. Annual Election

At the March 2005 election, Charles Eisenberg was re-elected as Chairman and F. Gerard ("Jerry") Adams was re-elected as Vice-Chair.



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IV. 2005 Highlights

The Economic Development Commission participated in various new and ongoing initiatives in line with its charge. The following are major projects in EDC's pipeline and summary of accomplishments in the past year; more detailed information is available in the attached meeting minutes.

Comprehensive Planning/Economic Development Strategy – Three members of the Economic Development Commission serve on CPAC: Charles Eisenberg, Jerry Adams and Carol Ann Shea. In 2005, EDC revised the draft economic development strategy to ensure consistency and eliminate redundancy with other elements of the comprehensive plan. The work was completed in conjunction with the Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC).

- *In 2006, EDC will continue to support CPAC until the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen approve the comprehensive plan.*

Newton Centre – Bruce A. Gold spearheaded the Newton Centre Subcommittee to explore opportunities in Newton Centre that further promote economic vitality and enhance the overall quality of life for all Newton residents. In doing so, the subcommittee finalized its findings and presented “The Newton Centre Renaissance – A Roadmap Forward” to Mayor David Cohen. The Mayor acted on the report's recommendation and formed the Newton Centre Task Force with Charles Eisenberg as the Chairman. Jerry Adams also serves on the Task Force and chairs the Property Use Subcommittee. Between the first meeting in May 2005 and December 2005, the Task Force completed the fact-finding portion of the process, with background research on property use, design, parking and traffic, zoning, financing and case studies. The findings were presented at a public forum in October 2005. To obtain as broad range of views and opinions as possible, surveys of merchants and residents were also conducted.

- *In 2006 the EDC will continue to support the Newton Centre Task Force to move through the various phases of the planning process.*

Development/Policy/Other Activities – The EDC reviewed proposed policy changes and large commercial development proposals, assessed their economic impact, and communicated its comments to appropriate parties.

^{D₄N_U} **Zoning and Planning Committee (ZAP) bonding authority docket item** - ZAP item #376-04 is to amend Sec. 22-75 to allow the EDC to exercise all the powers of an economic development and industrial corporation under Chapter 121 C of the General Laws upon a finding by the Board of Aldermen that there exists in the city, conditions of unemployment or threat of future unemployment. Setti Warren is taking the lead in assessing the pros and cons of this expanded power of authority. As part of its fact-finding communities with established EDICs were contacted for information



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on their purpose and authority. Discussions were also held with the Chief Budget Office and the Chairman of the Finance Committee.

^{D₄N_U} **Needham Street Reconstruction** – Michael Kruse, the Planning Director, presented the 25% reconstruction plan of Needham Street. At the appropriate time, EDC's input will be sought in how to finance the undergrounding of utilities including such options as District Improvement Financing and Business Improvement District.

^{D₄N_U} **Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC)** – Jack Leader represents Commission on EDAC. During 2005, EDAC reviewed and approved a \$35,000 micro loan to Brussel Sprouts, children's clothing store in Newtonville.

^{D₄N_U} **ZAP food related docket items** – The Commission monitored two proposed zoning amendments related to retail food establishments. One proposes amending Sections 30-1, 30-11, 30-12 and 30-13 of the zoning ordinance to distinguish the various retail food establishments allowed in Business, Manufacturing and Mixed Use districts. The second item refers to "drive-in food service establishments" and proposed amendments to Sections 30-1, 30-11(d)(10) and 30-11(g)(5) effecting its definition, accessory use in all business districts, and elimination in B2 districts by special permit. The Commission will continue to track the progress of these docket items, give consideration to impacts on the business community, and publicly comment at the appropriate time.

^{D₄N_U} **Business Liaison** - EDC maintained links with other economic development organizations, including the Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce and the Women's Enterprise Initiative, to ensure a coordinated approach to economic development.

- *In 2006 the EDC will continue to track policy changes and commercial development projects, review their economic feasibility, and comment on their impacts to the City.*

New Projects – EDC is accepting suggestions for and investigating new projects for the coming year. Under consideration are another village study, MBTA green line extension, air rights development over the Mass Pike, and development of Riverside.

- *In 2006 the EDC will select one or two new projects for further exploration and development.*